

since its inception, Ms. Hoffacre helped initiate the Art in Public Places program, the Brea Fest, featuring "A Taste of the Arts," and the Brea Children's Theater, all of which continue to be popular community events. She is affiliated with the Brea Art Association and the Brea Gallery and is highly regarded among artists and community members alike for her impeccable eye for fine art.

In a time when the quality of America's educational system has become the object of national criticism and debate, it gives me great pleasure to highlight the positive contributions of exceptional teachers like Ms. Hoffacre, who not only give of themselves in the classroom, but also set an example in the community for students to emulate. Far too often, the critical role that teachers play in the development of our nation's youth is overlooked, and in some cases, even discounted. However, today it is my hope that all Americans will join me in commending Ms. Hoffacre and teachers across the nation for their unfailing dedication, persistence, and commitment to providing students with the tools necessary for their success.

Again, I would like to congratulate Ms. Hoffacre on these accomplishments and thank her for her contributions to her students and the community.

MEDICARE MODERNIZATION AND PRESCRIPTIONS DRUG ACT OF 2002

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 27, 2002

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this rule and in opposition to H.R. 4954, the Medicare Modernization and Prescription Drug Act of 2002.

Tonight we are voting on legislation that represents the most drastic change in Medicare since the program was enacted in 1965. With this drastic change, one would assume there would be an open and honest rule that would allow Members to consider and vote on various legislative proposals. Unfortunately, for millions of seniors utilizing Medicare, this is not the case. Democrats have been denied the opportunity to present their plan to America's seniors. What is left is a bad bill, with no amendments, leaving no chance to make it better. Once again, the Republican Leadership of the House of Representatives has presented Members with the option of voting for a benefit that doesn't do enough, or voting for nothing at all.

The current bill includes provider reimbursements and has been endorsed by doctors and hospitals, but this bill does not provide adequate benefits to those seniors who really need it. Under the proposed bill, Medicare beneficiaries would be eligible to enroll in the drug program paying a premium estimated at \$35 per month and a deductible of \$250 a year. For drug expenditures between \$251–\$1000 the beneficiary would pay 20 percent and the government would pay 80 percent. For drug costs \$1001–\$2000, the program and enrollees would split the cost 50–50. Now comes the unbelievable part, for expenditures between \$2000 and \$3700, the enrollee would have to pay out of his own pocket. That's

right—there is a \$1700 gap where the seniors are left with the burden. As a result, nearly half of all seniors will fall into the gap and be forced to pay the full cost of their medications.

If we are going to give seniors a benefit, it needs to be a meaningful one that actually provides coverage. Seniors need a benefit in which they can afford their drugs and do not have to worry about their medications being covered. In addition, there should be one bill that will address the problems with Medicare reimbursement and provider payments and another that will focus solely on the needs of seniors. The bill before us is a combined version of reform—done in order to secure votes and pass. The Republicans have catered to the needs of various industries in order to pass their bill—knowing that this is the only way this proposal could stay alive. This is an insurance plan that cannot work. This legislation would rely on private insurance companies and health plans to cover the costs of the drugs. In particular, the bill before us allows insurers to refuse to participate and allows them to control costs at the expense of patients' welfare. No insurance program can work unless it attracts premiums from people who will not use the service. Those premiums are used to offset the cost associated with those beneficiaries whose drugs cost more than their premiums. This plan is doomed to failure because there is no way premiums can cover costs—especially when it is geared toward the senior population. The end result unfortunately is those seniors without insurance will still be unable to afford prescribed medicines and those seniors with insurance will continue to pay high premiums or co-pays for their insurance—ultimately changing little and helping very few.

If we in Congress are serious about strengthening Medicare for future generations, we need to invest in our seniors and Congress needs to be prepared to spend the funds necessary to provide a suitable prescription drug program. If the federal government can afford a \$273 billion farm bill and an \$800 billion bill making the estate tax permanent, I think we owe it to our seniors to find the money to provide a prescription drug benefit. The federal government has a responsibility to ensure that Americans who contribute to the Medicare program during their working years will have dependable, equitable, and affordable health coverage when they retire or become disabled regardless of their income or health status.

Mr. Speaker, the Democrat's intended to do that. We intended to come to the floor and present a proposal that would lower drug prices, guarantee coverage and enable seniors to get their medicines at the pharmacy of their choice. Since we have been denied a fair chance to present our proposal I cannot support this rule or the proposed bill and I urge my colleagues to vote no on both.

A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

HON. JERRY MORAN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, across Kansas, combines and harvest crews are wrapping up another wheat harvest. This year, the harvest story is not about the wheat being

cut, but about the wheat that should have been cut—wheat destroyed by drought and wheat plowed into the dry ground. Where there has been wheat to harvest, low yields are evidence of the ravages of drought. While farmers see harvests come and go every year, this one will certainly not soon be forgotten. Unfortunately, this year it's the dry weather and failed crop that will be remembered.

Last year drought took a heavy toll on Kansas. This year will be far worse. In Kansas, almost a million acres of wheat have been abandoned—an area larger than the state of Rhode Island. In southwest Kansas, the driest area of the state, as much as 90 percent of the wheat planted was lost to drought. This translates into a loss of over \$277 million in farm income this year. After last year's dismal crop, few thought things could get worse. But Kansas farmers now have \$277 million less than last year to pay their bills and to care for their families.

Behind the millions of dollars lost from the agricultural economy are real people. I am contacted daily by farmers and ranchers hurting from last year's drought, whose difficulties have been compounded by this year's losses. In Hugoton, farmers have seen less than an inch of rain in the last year, and cracks in the earth run several feet deep. Here, there is not even enough moisture to replant failed crops. In Rolla, where the federal grassland is being closed due to drought, ranchers are selling the cattle herds they have spent a lifetime building. All across western Kansas, ranchers are liquidating herds, as the little grass that was there has been grazed to the ground.

For the last 2 years, farmers in drought-affected areas have worked tirelessly, only to come away with less than what they started with. Crop insurance alone cannot relieve the cash flow crisis of these farm families. The need for assistance is greater, and more urgent, than it was a year ago. Farmers and ranchers need help to compensate for this natural disaster.

These are tough times in farm country, and we cannot close our eyes to the severity of this drought or the magnitude of its consequences. A dark cloud is hovering over the future of many producers in western Kansas; unfortunately, that cloud holds no rain. Without disaster assistance, this year, some farmers may simply dry up and blow away.

CONCERNING RISE IN ANTI- SEMITISM IN EUROPE

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 9, 2002

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the House on its unanimous support of H. Res. 393, Concerning the rise in Anti-Semitism in Europe.

Last month ground was broken in Boston at our Holocaust Memorial for a Liberators' Memorial. Survivors had long urged that tribute be paid to the American and Allied soldiers who fought and died to defeat the Third Reich. It is a fitting memorial and it inspires us to defend life, liberty, and justice for all persons.

I am troubled, however, that it has become necessary to defend human dignity and religious liberty in Europe, in Western Europe, in